

Even Start Evaluation Session Questions

Question: Students attend on schedule set around work and other responsibilities. How can programs address the challenge of families attending 10 hours a month of center-based PACT and 60 hours of Adult Education given that families have other responsibilities?

Answer: The federal legislation calls for family literacy services that are of sufficient intensity and duration. The number of hours per month refers to the “intensity” of services, and USDE has suggested that for adult education 60 hours per month of participation is recommended and for parent education 20 hours per month of participation is recommended. Our Kentucky Performance Indicators further divide the 20 hours into 10 hours of center-based and 10 hours of home-based parent/child literacy activities. Programs should work with families to accommodate work schedules.

Question: What is the definition of 20 hours of parenting/PACT education?

Answer: The definition of 20 hours is 10 hours of center-based activities and 10 hours of home-based activities each month. Both center- and home-based activities should be intentional, planned activities that are relevant to family goals. The interactive literacy activities were clarified as follows: 1) both the number of PACT activities and the number of hours families participate are counted toward the benchmark; 2) time period allows for pro-rating when program is not in session or family not enrolled an entire month; and 3) take-home PACT activities can count towards the benchmark as long as parents complete documentation.

Question: Is there a required or recommended number of home visits by Even Start staff?

Answer: There is no required number of visits. We recommend that families receive at least 2 visits per month.

Question: What is the status of the Committee of Practitioners? Does Kentucky’s Committee of Practitioners conform to federal law?

Answer: The Office of Special Instructional Services (OSIS) Advisory Committee serves as Kentucky’s Committee of Practitioners and conforms to federal legislation. The Advisory Committee meets three times a year.

Question: Can the Kentucky Institute for Family Literacy (KIFL) offer research-based parenting education, such as Parents as Teachers Training (PAT)?

Answer: KIFL, by virtue of being a division of the National Center for Family Literacy, has the capacity to offer almost any training of interest to Kentucky Even Start. In fact several National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) staff members are certified as Parents as Teachers trainers. However, this year, the PAT training was not included in the KIFL contract with KDE, so it could not be offered free to Even Start programs. On the other hand, the research-based training “Parenting with a Literacy Focus” was included in the KIFL contract with KDE and is available to all Even Start programs at no charge.

Question: Is it possible for Even Start budget being posted on the website?

Answer: KDE does not post program budgets on-line; however, you may receive a copy of Even Start’s budget by submitting your request in writing.

Question: Does the US Department of Education require states to reduce the federal portion of the match each year to programs?

Answer: KDE does not typically award programs less than \$75,000 federal funds for Even Start (see Section 1233); however, as a state agency, Kentucky reduces grant amounts each year by 10 percent down to \$75,000 in an effort to offer annual competitive grant applications for new, 5th, and 9th year applicants.

Question: What do programs need to put in the evaluation folder?

Answer: PFES has developed a Local Evaluation Checklist that lists the data that programs should collect. The checklist items address the data needed to meet the requirements of the federal legislation and the state performance indicators.

Question: What kind of appeal process is there when local data reported does not match returned data from the state?

Answer: The process will include review by the Even Start Evaluator and Even Start State Coordinator, and may involve consultation with the KDE Division of Assessment. If further resolution is needed, the Associate Commissioner for the Office of Academic and Professional Development may also have input and review.

Question: The September 2003 USDE Guidance document describes 20 hours a month for Parenting and PACT combined. Can programs also combine hours for Parenting and PACT in meeting the Kentucky Performance Indicators (4.1 and 4.2)?

Answer: In 2003-2004 the hours should be counted separately for 4.1 and 4.2. However, KDE and KY AE will consider combining these two indicators in terms of hours of participation for revisions in 2004-2005.

Question: How do we know if our teachers are using research based practices in each component?

Answer: KIFL is developing a tool for programs to use in evaluating their programs.

Question: What assistance is available to programs making or not making adequate yearly progress?

Answer: TA from KIFL is provided through a contract with the state to “assist local Even Start projects in improving the quality of their family literacy services” as outlined in section 1234(c)(1) of the Even Start statute. TA from KIFL is intended to meet the programs’ needs by working with the programs to provide assistance in areas they have identified as needing improvement in their Adequate Yearly Progress Plan. In addition, programs can request assistance to meet specific identified needs when they set up the site visit with KIFL.

Question: Where can we go for additional funding for our program?

Answer: The National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) has a book titled *Fundamentals of Fundraising for Family Literacy Programs*, which Kentucky programs can obtain from KIFL. You may also check the Kentucky web site for competitive and external grant opportunities:

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Grant+Opportunities/default.htm>.

Question: In our MUNIS reports, how do we code donated funds?

Answer: Report donated funds on the in-kind portion of your quarterly expenditure reports. Only funds that are allowable for Even Start services can be reported as donated funds. For example, indirect costs may not be used as in-kind contributions.

Question: What is the process for opening a new MUNIS code series?

Answer: Contact your Comprehensive District Improvement Plan Coordinator about submitting an open code request with the code number you would like to open. However, you may move funds from one open code to another without an amendment. If you have further questions, you may contact Thelma Hawkins, 502-564-1979.

Question: What kinds of PACT activities are considered center-based PACT time? Library? Museum? Schools family nights? Please list the conditions that are necessary for an activity to qualify as counting toward the 10 hours per month center based; and the conditions necessary to qualify as an acceptable home visit PACT.

Answer: Activities that are planned, intentional, and research-based are considered to be center-based activities for PACT. Field trips to libraries, museums and similar events are considered PACT activities if they result from Even Start planning and are related to instruction. Activities that are structured and follow a PACT sequence, which involves preparation and planning, are the conditions necessary to qualify as an acceptable home visit PACT.

Question: Does the minimum amount of \$75,000 per program refer to the federal portion of the grant, or to that plus the match?

Answer: It refers to the federal portion of the grant (see section 1233 (b)(1)).

Question: Can we enroll pregnant teens in Even Start before their babies are born?

Answer: Section 1236 states that services are to children from birth to 8 years whose parents are eligible for adult education services. Programs may use funding for recruitment activities with pregnant teens, but enrollment may begin after their babies are born.

Question: We are having problems with retention of families. What does the research say about retaining our families once they enroll?

Answer: An excellent summary of the research on retention and implications for family literacy can be found on pp. 121-131 in the manual “Program Administration in Family Literacy—Even Start,” which was given to every program that attended the January 27 -29, 2004 training session or the Evaluation Meeting on January 29. Any program that did not attend either training should contact Cindy Read to obtain a copy of the manual.

On page 122, the summary looks at research on retention by Quigley (1998) that identifies the first few weeks as a critical time to establish connections with students and identify the level of support they will need to stay in the program. Quigley’s research has found that some students have a high need for affiliation and do better in a small group setting than one-on-one or in self-study.

Also, on page 122, Comings, Cuban, Bos & Taylor (2001) have identified three categories of *themes* related to student persistence:

- **Programmatic themes** (stable leadership, access to technology, solid financial support)
- **Instructional themes** (tailoring instruction to student needs, measuring learning gains, offering high quality instruction appropriate to students’ reading levels)
- **Student-based themes** (accommodation to students cultural and personal identities, interests and goals and learning disabilities)

The authors also identified four categories of *strategies* to improve student persistence:

- **Informational strategies** (gathering student input through focus groups, interviews, surveys, etc.)
- **Support strategies** (low cost alternatives to providing child care and transportation)
- **Operational strategies** (increasing hours of operation, hiring more staff, providing greater access to technology)
- **Programmatic strategies** (more meaningful curriculum, redesigning student orientations, focusing on student goal-setting)

The summary on p. 129 identifies key strategies to improve retention such as:

- **Transition rites** (including induction and orientation into the program)
- **Social context** (staff attitudes and creating a positive, welcoming climate)
- **Significant Others** (acknowledging and accommodating the “family systems” that each student is a part of)
- **Meaningful Curriculum** (linked to the learners’ goals, integrating with all components)
- **Begin with the End in Mind** (plan for a successful transition out of the program from the beginning)

Another reference on persistence that programs may want to access on the NCSALL web site (<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ncsall/research/report12.pdf>) is NCSALL Report #12 (December 1999), “Persistence Among Adult Basic Education Students in Pre-GED Classes” by Comings, Parrella, and Soricone. This study identifies students with **specific goals** as more likely to stay in an adult education program. The authors outline several “supports” programs can provide adult students in order to increase persistence:

- 1) **Establishing the student’s specific goal** (this may take counseling with the student to identify short term goals that lead to long term goals)
- 2) **Building self-efficacy**, or the belief in the student that they can achieve specific tasks, by providing experiences such as:
 - a. **Mastery experiences**—allowing them to be successful in specific tasks and providing assessments that show them they have been successful.

- b. **Vicarious experiences**—providing role models (often former students) who did persist and have succeeded in meeting their goals.
 - c. **Social persuasion**—verbal assurances of staff, creating a positive culture of support in the classroom
 - d. **Addressing physiological and emotional states** such as anxiety and tension that prevent learning by acknowledging life experiences, having students write about their fears, having other students or teachers talk about how they have overcome their fears (note: the authors recognize that adult educators are not mental health experts, but talk more about providing educationally-appropriate experiences that allay fear and anxiety).
- 3) **Management of positive and negative forces affecting the students**—gaining an understanding of the forces affecting students and helping students develop a plan to deal with the negative forces.

Progress towards goals—programs must provide services of sufficient quality that students make progress and have assessment procedures that allow students to measure progress.

Question: Our KYAE family literacy program is not working with us collaboratively. We have tried to get them to work together with us, but they refuse. What can we do?

Answer: In the ideal world, the Even Start director and KYAE family literacy coordinator sit down and develop a **plan** that includes:

- 1) Identification of “points of difference” between the two programs, leading to an identification of how the families are referred to each program. In many counties, Even Start takes families with younger children (0-8) and the KYAE enrolls families with older children. Others look at “most in-need” criteria, and refer the most in-need families to Even Start because the funding allows for greater intensity of services. Still others divide the county geographically, each targeting a different area of the county.
- 2) Communication with collaborative partners who refer families so they know which program to refer to.
- 3) Development of a tracking system to ensure that families are enrolling and that each program is getting its “fair share” of enrollments to meet funding agency targets. This will entail constant monitoring and communication between the two programs.
- 4) Sharing of resources and expertise so that everyone wins. For instance, the adult education program provides adult education for the families in Even Start. Even Start provides transportation or child care for certain events. An outside speaker brought in by one program might be made available to both programs. See Teresa Sneed’s article in the winter issue of *PD Connections* (http://adulthood.state.ky.us/PDNEWS_Winter03.pdf) about this successful approach in Bowling Green. Note that in Bowling Green the adult education program and Even Start programs are under completely different fiscal agents, yet they manage to make the collaboration work for their community.

If the problem is that you aren’t living in the ideal world (always an issue!), here are some possible solutions to collaboration obstacles:

- 1) **Start with your proposal.** Did the KYAE partner sign a letter of support saying they would provide services that they are no longer willing to provide? In that case, the signatory may need to be reminded of this original commitment. (Sometimes the person who signed the letter is no longer there, so the commitment should be revisited).
- 2) **Find a “higher level” mediator.** If the issue is that one partner won’t cooperate, then someone with greater authority in the county should be brought in to help mediate. Ideally, this person should understand the larger goal of improving literacy outcomes in the county, and have a more objective approach to solving the problem. If both programs are under the same fiscal agent, this is relatively easy. For instance, it might be the Title One director, or an assistant superintendent. If one program is under a co-op and the other is under the school district, keep in mind that the school district is a “customer” of the co-op. Someone at the appropriate level of the co-op will be very motivated to solve the problem, especially if the superintendent or assistant superintendent

gets involved. If each program is run by totally different agencies, you have more of a challenge to find the right person to mediate. Again, it will need to be someone that both agencies want to please. Perhaps it's someone from the local Area Development District (ADD) office or the Workforce Investment Board.

- 3) **Share information about each program** in the meeting in order to develop the plan:
- How many families does each program have to serve?
 - What is the budget for each program?
 - What are allowable and non-allowable expenses for each program?
 - Where are services located in relation to where the families are that need services? (Is there a logical geographical division for the programs?)

Answering these questions in a systematic way may lead very smoothly to a logical division of services/territories/enrollments for the two programs.

Make sure the KYAE program understands that they get “credit” for all Even Start families enrolled in KYAE adult education. Once they realize that the Even Start enrollments help them meet “rewards,” they may be more motivated to quit competing. After all, the Even Start program is doing the work of recruiting and they get to count the adults! Win-win. (Remind the KYAE program that the AErin code for Even Start adults is 21.)

Question: What research based curriculum is available for Adult ed, parenting, pact, preschool? How do we know which ones to pick for our program?

Answer: There are not research based “off the shelf” curricula available for all of these per se. What’s available is information on best practices that are supported by the research. NCFL does not endorse any particular tool, but could provide types of instruments to evaluate best practices. Currently they have such tools in their Early Childhood and ABE “buildout” trainings.

Question: Where can we get help with administering the DP II?

Answer: Dr. Robert Popp can provide assistance to programs that need help with administering the DP II (<http://www.bobpopp.com>). Other resources include the Early Childhood Regional Training Centers and the Division of Early Childhood Development at KDE (<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Preschool/default.htm>).